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Tributes to

Abraham Lincoln

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources providing testimonials lauding the 16th President of the United States

Writings of

Angelo Patri

From the files of the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

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Lincoln's Ideals Enrich Children's Lives

By ANGELO PATRI

MEN and nations advance materially and spiritually on the strength of an idea. "No army can withstand the strength of an idea whose time has come." The growth of an idea into an ideal for which men will fight to the death if need be is a long, slow process.

Looking back through the years, we see the growth of one idea that brought the birth of this nation: freedom of men's minds and bodies. The barons facing King John at Runnymede, the Signers declaring "to which we pledge our fortunes, our lives and our sacred honor," Lincoln's grave words, ". . . we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation—or any other nation—so conceived (in liberty) and so dedicated (to equality) can long endure," are milestones marking mankind's determination to be free.

* * *

THE price of freedom is high. The Colonial patroit knew its full weight. So did the brave men, women and children who, down the generations, have paid the "full measure of devotion." At times it seemed as if all the pain and sacrifice, "blood, sweat and tears," had gone for naught. Yet, at the time of crisis, great leaders arose to make clear the way to a greater growth, a new glory, a truer happiness in the lives of people. Such a man was Abraham Lincoln.

At the start of the Civil War, its cause was not clear in the minds of all men. To some it was the cause of states' rights; to others, freedom for the slaves. Toward the end, Lincoln, at Gettysburgh, made it clear. It was one more step toward the freedom of mankind from the domination of any man, government or nation; "that government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from this earth." For this ideal, Lincoln gave his life.

* * *

IT is fitting that on this anniversary of Lincoln's birth we think of these things and "noble resolve" to uphold this ideal, nourish it by thought and action, inspire and strengthen it in the minds of our children, so that they in turn stand ready to support it with "their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor."

Each generation in its turn must secure freedom by appreciation, sacrifice and service. Not all are called to leadership, but all are called to service. The watchword is "Eternal Vigilance."

* * *

Patri, Angelo

Lincoln

By Angelo Patri

Author of "A Schoolmaster in the Great City"; Principal Public School 45, The Bronx

N.Y. Evening Post 2-11-1922

THE class in history was reciting. They had studied a life of Lincoln for a month and now they were telling the teacher and each other what they had gathered from it.

The teacher sat at the desk, her notebook before her, marking each recitation. Her eyes were sad. Her voice was gray with disappointment. She had tried so hard to fill these boys full of the inspiration of the great soul of this man and now this was all, over and over again:

"Lincoln was born in a log cabin in Kentucky. His parents were poor"—and so on, down to "He was shot in Ford's Theatre on the night of April 15, 1865."

Dry, dreary routine stuff. And she had hoped for some fire, some spark lighted in some soul. Ah, teaching was but a barren trade——

"William," she called. "Wee Wullie," his mother would have called.

A swaying willow wand of a child rose, holding to the edge of his desk. His face was pale and bore the traces of pain about the great dark eyes. Often William could not attend classes because he was ill. His mother said he was ill; William never mentioned it. He talked very little. It took a great deal to excite him sufficiently to make him use his scant strength in speech and when aroused he spoke with a trace of the Scotch burr of his mother's tongue.

"I'm thinkin'," said he, "that yon was a great mon. A very great mon. In fact, I'm thinkin' that he was the greatest mon of all. You see, he could thole so well.

"You mind, when he was a wee chap, he lost his mither. Trouble came to him in the very beginning.

"When he was a lad he had to work very hard and get very little for it. He chopped wood many and many a day and ploughed fields and tended the cattle. I'm thinkin' how hard his back must have ached at night and him not sayin' a word about it.

"Then he grew into a mon and carried his pain in his mind. He must have, for how else could he know that the slaves were suffering?

"Then he declared the terrible war. Then he suffered a thousand years in one, for if he didn't help the slaves he suffered their pains, and if he fought through the war he suffered the pains of all the people it touched."

"You can see it all in his face. At the end they killed him, but that didn't trouble him, for hadn't he lived harder than ever he could die?

"I'm thinkin' he was a great mon. The greatest of all, for he could thole so." And Wee Wullie sat down.

"Thole," said the teacher with shining eyes, "is the Scotch word for suffering in silence."

(Copyright, 1922, by Angelo Patri)

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Ken City Journal - Feb 11 '22

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(Copyright, 1922, by Angelo Patri.)

Patri, Angelo

LINCOLN INSPIRATION TO BOYS

Cincinnati Enquirer 2/12/41

Power Of His Spirit Permitted Him To Reach The Highest Honors That The World Can Bestow.

BY ANGELO PATRI.

IN THE life of a great leader there is always inspiration and encouragement for youth. Abraham Lincoln was a man, subject to the laws of life, burdened with all its woes, bedeviled by all its nuisances, tempted by all its lures, yet able to rise above the grief and stand up to acquit himself like a man. Lincoln was that kind of leader.

He knew poverty at firsthand and had no fear of it. To him the bare cabin, the simple food, the coarse clothing were all a part of life as he knew it, and that was not as young people of today know it. His life was near to the earth —the hard, rough, tough way of nature—and that is never "nice." Lincoln and nicety were strangers, but Lincoln and truth were intimate companions.

He grew up with the facts of life so that they never shocked or disgusted him. Life was good in his eyes, and the struggles of men, their failures and successes, their devious and often tortuous ways to their goals called out only his sympathy and understanding. He could laugh because he could share the feeling that prompted the action. He had no fear of life in any phase because he had met it in all its phases and still believed it good.

Good people found fault with him. They skipped nothing. He was homely, crude, ignorant, a rascally politician, a buffoon. They accused him of singing ribald songs on a torn battlefield. They accused him of every crime short of murder and hinted broadly at that Even his friends were saddened at times by what they thought his lack of nicety.

Nice? They meant suave, smooth polite, pleasant to the ladies. They could not see that Lincoln was too big to allow nicety to measure him in any degree. His understanding his sympathy, his great intelligence lifted him beyond the little ways of niggling folk up to gigantic heights where he towered like an oak against the sky. Where other men were "nice," he was grand; where they were gentlemanly, he was majestic.

For the young people of this day Lincoln's life is an inspiration and a vast horizon of the spirit. He proved it possible to be poor, to lack every outward grace, to be without every aid toward fame and fortune that other men took for granted, and reach the highest honors that the world can bestow. This he did, not because of his great physical strength or his keen intelligence. Other men had strength to match his and brains as keen. But other men didn't possess the power of his spirit.

Spirit is something nobody can explain, but which everybody can feel. No man has ever seen it face to face, but everybody has seen its work and felt its presence. It is the power that rises above all weakness, that masters all sorrow and grief, and goes forward to the goal in unshakable faith, in unswervable loyalty to its elected cause. That was the quality that made Lincoln great. That is the quality that will make another Lincoln, in another day—our day.

Patri, Angelo

Patri Sees Lincoln as Inspiration

Boys Should Know Story of How Simple Man Reached Heights

Oakland Tribune 2-15-41

By ANGELO PATRI

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Troublesome habits in children develop into traits that alienate people from them as they grow older. Check the trouble at its source. Send for Angelo Patri's booklet "Annoying Habits" enclosing ten cents in coin. Address Angelo Patri, The Tribune, Oakland, Calif.

Patri, Angelo

Power of Lincoln's Spirit Is Inspiration to Youth

2/12/41 Buffalo Evening News

By ANGELO PATRI

IN THE life of a great leader there is always inspiration and encouragement for youth. Abraham Lincoln was a man, subject to the laws of life, burdened with all its woes, bedeviled by all its nuisances, tempted by all its lures, yet able to rise above the grief and stand up to acquit himself like a man. Lincoln was that kind of leader.

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Patri, Angelo

2-12-23

Lincoln

By Angelo Patri

Author of "A Schoolmaster in the Great City"; Principal Public School 45, The Bronx

THIS is Abraham Lincoln's birthday. He gave his life to the service of his country and died before you were born. Perhaps you wonder why we should tell you about him and keep on telling you about him year after year.

One reason is that people like Lincoln live forever, their names growing brighter as the years pass. That is the law of eternity—"He that loseth his life shall find it." And the same power that ordained the law planted in each human being the longing to save his life throughout the years.

If you study Lincoln's life you will discover the secret. You will know how to live your life that it may outlast your body, your time, your very idea of time. That is why we tell you about Lincoln so often.

Of course, it is not easy to be a Lincoln. The very first thing you have to do is the hardest of all. You have to understand that the person inside you, the man who gives the orders, the man who so much wants to do pleasant things, to have pleasant days, to be purringly comfortable, has to be taught that he can have what he wants only by giving it up. That is pretty difficult for a beginning, isn't it?

But Lincoln had to begin just that way that he might end in the way of the immortals. Don't you think that he wished he might have all the time he wanted to play about the woods and hunt the raccoons and row on the rivers and not have to think about chopping down the tough old trees to make logs and cutting their branches into firewood so meals could be cooked and the cabin warmed? But he had to chop wood.

Don't you suppose that he wanted to lie under the trees in the good spring days and study over the precious books that he had secured? I'm sure that he wished with all his might that he might go to the school a few miles down the river and study with the teacher and the handful of scholars there in the daytime, instead of struggling to help himself in the evening by the light of the fire or the flaming pine knot. I'm sure he smiled at his wishes and sighed, too, as he worked with the men in the woods or helped his father about the cabin.

And when he found himself, after all those years of giving up what he wanted and fighting hard for what he could get, the President of the United States and with a great war on his hands, don't you believe that he wanted very much to find a pleasant way out? Don't you think he suffered as he shook his head and said, "I can find no other way. I must do what I believe to be my duty, and let the easier way go by."

The great sadness in his face, the deep patience, the lines of grief carved upon it, tell the story of a life given up to purchase the larger happiness that lay in self-sacrifice. He died in the service of his fellows and his name is written on the roll of the martyrs, those who live forever.

We tell you about him so that you may learn the road to great content and deep peace. It lies over your own heart. Can you find the courage to walk upon it? Lincoln, a great American, did just that.

(Copyright, 1923, by Angelo Patri)

To-morrow: The Slapping Habit

Patri, Angelo

Our Children

By ANGELO PATRI

LINCOLN.

The school children of America will be reminded that the twelfth of February is the anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. What can that gracious spirit offer to the children of our day?

It seems to me that the note of sincerity, of fundemental honesty of thought and action might be accented for our good. Lincoln knew, as all wise leaders of men may know, that we are fallible, that there is much of shoddy in the best of us. He knew our weaknesses but he also knew that in every one of us lies a response to the call of sincerity supporting its ideal.

This understanding of men, based as it was upon his own sincerity, enabled him to be patient with all sorts and conditions of people. Because he never tried to deceive himself as to his own motives and emotions he had a marvelous directness and clarity of mind that pierced to the heart of the matter. Because he could smile at his own vagaries he could be gentle and tolerant of those of other men. Conscious of many sides of a question he could still abide by his faith in the ideal until it came to common acceptance.

When those who had less than his power of simplicity and directness appeared before him with their plans for the salvation of the nation he could listen, he could understand,—send them away empty yet with no smart, with no grudging. They retained their faith in his sincerity even when he decided against them.

Only strong souls can know the serenity of mind which complete sincerity brings. Weak people, helpless people, never may know it but must shift from thought to thought, never quite certain, never convinced, always ready to yield to the pressure of the mob, to the voice of assumed authority, to high influence and emotional urges. Lincoln was proof against all that. His sincerity made him a bulwark for the people.

We too must accept this truth about idealism and its sincerity. Honesty of thought and purpose, a high idealism wait on the call of utter sincerity. The great body of the peopl know and answer to that call. Lin coln understood that well and there in lay the secret of his power witl people.

Mistakes had to happen. They were unimportant to the great idea. Misunderstandings and errors are but the waste on the floor of the master's workroom to be swept up and discarded. One group may beset us with wails and lamentation, another may threaten and sneer. Misguided weakness may caution and selfishness make impossible demands. Strong in the sincerity of our ideal we go serenely forward to the end, as Lincoln did.

If we can give the children of today some glimpse of this need for sincerity in public life, some hint of understanding of the essential quality of honesty and sincerity essential in all our dealings, in all our national activities, we shall do well. Lincoln will not have lived and died in vain.

(Copyright, 1930)

Patri, Angelo

Lincoln's Honesty And Sincerity Provide Example For Children

Patri Says Parents Can Profit by Taking Advantage of Holiday To Impress Their Young With Qualities of the Great Emancipator

By ANGELO PATRI

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YONKERS N. Y. STATESMAN
FEBRUARY 11, 1930

Patri, Angelo

NEW YORK EVENING POST, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1933

Lincoln Day Lessons

Young and Old Can Learn From Attitude of His Contemporaries

By ANGELO PATRI

Lincoln's birthday was set apart as a day of meditation on the ways of a wise and great leader. Children are told his story and exhorted to follow his noble example. Few people who tell his story today stop to consider how ordinary the man looked to his neighbors. And what a hard time he had proving himself to be anything but a very ordinary person indeed.

I am certain from all I can gather about his boyhood that nobody thought him extraordinary. His father didn't look up to him as a leader. He gave him odd jobs to do and put more than usual responsibility on his shoulders. His mother did what she could for him as any mother would have done, but she made no sign if she thought him wonderful.

While he was growing up he got no special consideration. Nobody said, "Here is a genius, a leader, I will lend him a hand up." He had to dig out his education as best he could whenever he could. His schooling was catch as catch can. He lived without fear or favor, certainly without favor.

And as he lived, for the most part, so he died. He served his country nobly and he died in her cause. Not as a hero but as an ordinary President of these United States. He got the same complaints through the mails, the same sharp criticisms in the editorials. He received the same delegation bearing admonitions and reproaches. He got the same hard knocks from his constituents.

He died without knowing that he was to be hailed as the savior of his country and honored beyond all other Presidents, save, perhaps, George Washington himself.

After he was gone the truth began to dawn upon the world. We had entertained an angel unaware. We had glory in our midst. We had touched its garment and it had made us whole but we were unconscious until the man passed. It is so that all men live and pass. Few of them know the weight or the value of their mission, especially if it is great or heroic.

I never enter a classroom filled with boys or girls without thinking, "which one of you has the mantle fallen upon? Which one of you has been selected to carry the cross? Which of you ordinary children carries within you the unquenchable flame of high service to God and man?"

Nobody knows what the life of a child will bring forth. The ordinary routine of eating and sleeping and playing and working hides the child from us. He speaks and moves as other children speak and move. We know his father and his mother and they are just people like ourselves. Ordinary wholesome folk. Their child, perhaps our own child, cannot be extraordinary.

Maybe ordinary everyday attendance to duty gives the most ordinary among us a sense of high calling that goes far toward making him unusual. That in itself ought to give us added incentive to rear a child uprightly. It might be that such a rearing might bring the divine spark into power and this ordinary child become the chosen one.

A man's measure is never rightly taken until the shadow of his earthly presence has passed. Then you can see him.

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Patrick Angelo

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Tribes